

This is not simply, I think, because women tend by nature to have more- grace, as men more strength; or because they have a greater need, and a greater wish to please. They have tended also, ever since civilisation allowed many of them a good deal of leisure, to have their originality and their natural spirit less worn down than men, whether in the mill of education or on the grindstone of active life. It is easier for hands unroughened by labour to keep their lightness of touch. This is not merely a vague generalisation; it has been noticed in widely different ages and countries what a natural command women may possess over their native tongue in its most living and unpedantic purity. It was remarked under the Roman Republic; it was remarked again in the France of Louis XIV, by Vaugelas: 'Il vaut mieux consulter les femmes,' says he, 'et ceux qui n'ont pas etudie, que ceux qui sont bien savants en la langue grecque et en la latine/ A century later Diderot is even more downright: 'C'est que le bon style est dans le coeur; voila pourquoi tant de femmes disent et ecrivent comme des anges, sans avoir appris ni a dire ni a ecrire, et pourquoi tant de pedants diront et ecriront mal toute leur vie, quoiqu'ils n'aient cesse d'etudier sans apprendre.'

Here lies part of the charm in the letters of Dorothy Osborne; but only part. Letters need more

than style;
particularly love-letters. For these last are
apt to be dull
reading; theirs is at once the most eternal
and the most
ephemeral of all subjects. They have indeed
two essential
themes—the facts of the situation and the
feelings of the
lovers; and the facts have all the more need
to be vivid
since the feelings, however thrilling for the
persons concerned,
tend to be so monotonous for
everyone else. The
cooing of turtles is agreeable; but exciting
it is not. Ac-
cordingly love-letters are the better for a
love that does